



STATE OF WASHINGTON
VETERANS AFFAIRS ADVISORY COMMITTEE
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Meeting Minutes

Meeting attended by (VAAC Member)	Owen McCurdy, Tom Bungert and Bob Jones
Date	April 28, 2016
Time	10:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.
Location	Memorial Hall 210 W. Franklin Street, Shelton, WA
Call to Order	Meeting called to order by Owen McCurdy Invocation by Bob Jones Pledge of Allegiance by Owen McCurdy
Welcome & Introductions:	Welcome and Introduction done by Owen McCurdy
Presentations	<p>WDVA Update – Lourdes E. Alvarado-Ramos, Director</p> <p>Veterans Homelessness – to date according to last one night point in count homeless (2015) there were approximately 1,400 homeless veterans. WDVA along with Department of Commerce and community partners (for profit and not for profit organizations) are working together to address this issue.</p> <p>Washington Military Transition Council (WMTC) - provide transitioning veterans opportunities for employment, education, apprenticeship and entrepreneurship opportunities. This also resulted in the creation of 8 apprenticeships at JBLM and 600 jobs. Veterans unemployment rate reduced from 7.5% to 3.5%. Annual Military Transition Summit resulted in an average of 250 on the spot job offers.</p> <p>Incarcerated Veterans – 9% of inmates in state prisons are veterans. WDVA is working with DOC to be able to assist them. So far at Stafford Creek and Coyote Ridge a veterans pod was created – where all veterans are housed in one unit and for a veteran inmate to be able to be housed in this pod there are criteria that they must meet. So far the veterans pod have a crochet club, wood working, etc.</p> <p>Veterans Suicide – Because of unaddressed emotional and mental issues that a veteran is suffering there has been rise in veterans suicide. In 2015 there were 233 veterans suicide reported which is approximately 1.5 veteran a day in our state die of suicide. This year both the senate and house passed E2SHB 2793 – Suicide Education. This bill establishes a Safe Homes Task Forces (Including WDVA participation) to develop suicide awareness and prevention education messages and training and implement advocacy efforts with key stakeholders to pair suicide prevention training</p>

with distribution of devices for safe storage of lethal means (guns). This bill also creates a Safe Homes Project to certify firearms dealers and firearms ranges that meet specific requirements as Safe Homes Partners. Licensed pharmacists are to complete a one-time training on suicide assessment, treatment and management.

Community Update – Commissioner Randy Neatherlin

Mason County has an active Veterans Advisory Board and currently the chair of the board is a woman veterans. Mason County had set aside \$100K for veterans housing and the board had extended the maximum amount that a veteran and/or their family can apply for in the veterans assistance fund.

Five (5) months ago, Mason County also launch their Veterans Court.

Mason County also launch a mentoring program. To date there are 32 individuals that are in this program.

Veterans Assistance Fund – Harry Tachell

Veterans Assistance Fund was created to help eligible veterans and their families to assist in certain circumstances. Any honorably discharged veterans or veterans with a general discharge under honorable conditions can access this fund – they must be a resident of Mason County for at least ninety (90) days. Applicant must present proof of residency, veteran status and income at time of application. The maximum amount granted is \$1,000.00 per year. To apply, visit their 2 locations located in Shelton at the Memorial Hall (210 West Franklin) and Belfair at the North Mason County Resource (140 NE SR 300)

North Mason Resources – Harry Tachell

This office provides Mason County Residents one stop shop to access: Affordable Care Act Health Care Sign Up, Behavioral Health Resources Preventative Dental Care Service, Direct Lifeline Mobile Phone Service, Family Partnership Nurse, Hispanic Translation Service, Mason County Homeless Advocate, Veterans Services thru DAV and American Legion – these are some of the few services that are available in this office.

Behavioral Health – Adrian Magnuson Whyte

Dr. Magnuson- Whyte is one of 35 behavioral health providers of WDVA. She provides counseling service to veterans and family members with war-era and PTSD related problems. The other counseling service she provides is readjustment, bereavement, military sexual trauma.

Employment – Michael Hester

Mike is a Local Veterans Employment Representative for Mason County. He is responsible in ensuring that veterans and eligible spouses received

priority of service when they visit a work source employment office. A veteran and eligible spouse would be given priority in job referrals, employment counseling, job search workshops, referrals to training programs. There is also WIA (Workforce Investment Act) – if a veteran is approved for WIA, there are limited vocational training programs available at no cost. There is also the Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA) – veterans who lost their job due to foreign trade or shifts in production under TAA – a veteran can be eligible for retraining, health care, tax credit, subsistence payment and other benefits.

YesVets – Heidi Audette

Is a veteran hiring campaign created by HB 2040 during the 2015 Legislative Session. Washington State employer are recognized with a YesVets decal once they sign up and hire a veteran. An annual recognition ceremony will be held on Flag Day (June 14th) to highlight YesVets partners and also recognize businesses throughout the year that are going above and beyond in hiring veterans. Employers who wish to participate should visit: <https://www.esd.wa.gov/yesvets>

Supportive Services for Veterans Families(SSVF)/Opportunity Council – Najla Neumann

Metropolitan Development Council (MDC) was awarded a three year \$6 million grant from the US Department of Veterans Affairs to help ensure that veterans in all counties of Washington state will have access to services that aim to end homelessness. Under the grant in Supportive Services for Veterans Families (SSVF), MDC will work with community partners to serve additional 720 veterans and their families in the next 3 years. This grant is part of a nationwide push to end veteran's homelessness. The goal is to move towards a concept called Functional Zero – where any veteran who slips into homelessness is given immediate access to temporary housing within 24 hours of being found to be homeless and then helped with permanent housing within 30 days.

Mason County Veterans Court – Renee Cullop

The Veterans Court in Mason County has been in existence for 5 months. The court is handled on a specialized court docket involving veterans charged with typically felony or misdemeanor non-violent criminal charge by diverting eligible veteran defendants with substance dependency and/or mental illness. The court substitutes a treatment problem solving model for traditional court processing. Veterans are identified through specialized screening and assessments and voluntarily participate in a judicially supervised treatment plan that a team of court staff, veteran health care professional, veteran peer mentors and mental health professional develop. At regular status hearings treatment plans and other conditions are periodically reviewed for appropriateness, incentives are offered to reward adherence to court conditions and sanctions for non-adherence are handed down. Upon admission to Veterans Treatment Court, the court staff and mentors assist the veteran with an array of stabilization and other services.

**Issues
Discussed**

1. Choice Program – a WWII veteran who was approved to seek outside medical care – hospital and doctor’s bills are sent to him – VA refuses to pay. WDVA referred the veteran to CHOICE champion at US DVA for assistance.
2. A veteran asked that we invite a representative from DSHS Child Protective Services to be able to answers issues regarding child support payment, child custody, etc.
3. Access to Behavioral Health Counselor – veteran have difficulty in getting appointment to behavioral health counselor. WDVA have counselors spread across the state – Mason County has a WDVA counselor and qualified veterans and/or their family could access the state funded counselor. Connected WDVA Counselor Dr. Magnuson-White to the veteran.
4. Yearly accredited Veterans Service Officer Training – WDVA still conducts yearly training for Veterans Service Officer – dates for 2016 training will be posted on the website and notice will also be sent via e-mail for those that are signed up in our website.
5. Time in getting a claim approved. Due the recent influx and downsizing in the military, so many veterans are filing claims thus its taking longer for claims to be approved – the average length of time is between 9-18 months before a veteran will hear about their claims. This is the average wait time and veterans service officers must do due diligence when helping a veteran file a claim to ensure that all necessary documents are submitted for the claim.
6. NW Justice Project – their funding is winding down and it is not being renewed. However veterans can still call their toll free number 888-201-1014 – the line is open from 9:15 a.m. to 12:15 p.m. or visit their website at www.washingtonlaw.org and there will be a Discharge Training Upgrade on May 27, 2016 and it will be in Lacey – 40 slots are available.
7. HVRP Grant (Homeless Veterans Reintegration Project) – why is this program not available in Mason County. Correct HVRP is not currently available for veterans residing in Mason County, however, Supportive Services for Veterans Families (SSVF) is available in Mason County that provide the same service as SSVF. Veterans in Mason County may be eligible for the Veterans Reintegration Program (VIP) that is being administered by WDVA. VIP application ca be access by: <http://www.dva.wa.gov/sites/default/files/VIP%20Application%20for%20Website.pdf> or taking their completed application to the nearest Work Source Office.
8. Possibility in educating prospective employers regarding hiring veterans and retention of veterans that are currently employed. This is an ongoing process and Employment Security Department along with WDVA is taking the lead in working with employers on how to better understand the veterans that are currently employed by them and also providing them with contact information when they have questions or issues with their veteran employee(s).

	<p>9. Availability of behavioral health counselors for spouses as well as their children. WDVA have contracted counselors that provide this service to veterans' spouses and their children. Connected Dr. Magnuson-Whyte with a couple of veterans' spouses that was present at the town hall meeting.</p>
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